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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 KINSHASA 000639

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [KPKO](#) [CG](#)
SUBJECT: NKUNDA GIVES HIS VERSION OF REALITY IN KINSHASA
NEWSPAPER INTERVIEW

REF: KINSHASA 629

¶1. (U) Summary: Dissident General Laurent Nkunda gave an extended interview to a Kinshasa-based newspaper outlining his views on the so-called "mixage" process and the intentions of his political front organization. His comments, published in the June 6 edition of "La Reference Plus," attempt to burnish his image as the "protector" of all Congolese, not just the Tutsi community of eastern DRC. Nkunda also tried to distance himself from massacres committed by forces under his command in Kisangani and Bukavu. End summary.

¶2. (U) The Kinshasa-based newspaper "La Reference Plus" published June 6 a two-page interview with dissident General Laurent Nkunda from his base in Masisi territory of North Kivu province. Nkunda's comments covered a variety of military and political issues, including the so-called "mixage" of pro-government forces and of troops loyal to him; allegations that he is recruiting new soldiers; and his involvement in past killings committed by forces he once commanded. The date of the actual interview was not published, though it likely took place in the past two weeks.

VIEWS ON "MIXAGE" AND ALLEGATIONS OF RECRUITMENT

¶3. (SBU) Nkunda claimed "mixage" was part of an unwritten "gentleman's agreement" reached with Congolese Air Force Commander General John Numbi in Kigali in December 2006. He claimed the agreement arranged for a cease-fire between his and government forces, the integration of his troops into the military via "mixage," and the eventual return of refugees in neighboring countries. Nkunda said despite his initial satisfaction with the "mixage" program, he now sees several problems with the arrangement. He alleged the government has refused to provide forces for the creation of a sixth "mixed" brigade, and that military authorities have not provided adequate provisions and logistical support to the existing units. Nkunda argued that such lack of support has impeded the brigades from carrying out operations against the FDLR and is eroding morale. He claimed that despite the perceived difficulties with "mixage," the "mixed" brigades have secured many areas once under the control of the FDLR.

¶4. (SBU) Nkunda did not answer a direct question regarding reports he continues to recruit forces in the DRC and Rwanda, and instead challenged the legitimacy of MONUC officials to make such statements. He claimed there were numerous demobilized Rwandan soldiers in the DRC -- including himself and President Joseph Kabila -- who have the "right" to be

integrated into the Congolese army. (Note: MONUC DRRR officials have repatriated approximately 100 Rwandans from Nkunda's ranks in the past six months, most of whom claim to have been recruited in Rwanda. End note.)

ON FDLR AND OTHER SECURITY THREATS

15. (SBU) The dissident general claimed his political front, the National Congress for the Defense of the People (CNDP), now has as its mission the elimination of the FDLR, and it will later go after ADF-NALU forces in North Kivu. (Comment: The CNDP is not an officially recognized political party and has no authority to conduct political, let alone military, activities. End comment.) He urged both military and political solutions to the region's FDLR problem, adding that the group's members could either return to Rwanda or remain in the DRC, though they would have to be disarmed. Nkunda said he intended to extend the CNDP's activities to other areas and issues, including the reconciliation of Ituri's militias and securing South Kivu province. Nkunda asked rhetorically why the government continues to demonize him when he and his supporters are trying to eliminate "killers" who threaten the Congolese.

DISTANCING HIMSELF FROM PAST EVENTS

16. (SBU) Nkunda distanced himself from several brutal incidents with which he has been closely associated, laying the responsibility on former colleagues instead. He claimed

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he was not in Kisangani in May 2002 when an attempted army mutiny broke out, after which more than 160 people were summarily executed. Nkunda said he was in Rwanda at the time for military training, and only returned to Kisangani as part of a delegation of ANC officers to support then-ANC Commander General Gabriel Amisi. He alleged those who died did so during the course of fighting, not as part of a massacre. (Comment: This is not true. In at least one incident investigated by the UN, Nkunda's forces bound, gagged and executed 28 people, put their bodies in bags weighted with stones, and threw them off a bridge into the Congo River. End comment.) Insisting he is a scapegoat, he laid the blame for the incident on Amisi and other then-ANC commanders, including Generals Sylvain Buki and Malick Kijege, who were in charge of the troops involved in the fighting. Nkunda further claimed RCD officials "invented" the story of the Kisangani massacre and wondered why no one from the party has ever fully explained what happened.

17. (SBU) Nkunda claimed (comment: falsely) that there is no GDRC arrest warrant against him. He said he wants to remain in the military, will eventually integrate, and believes he has provided a service to the country in handing over some 8,000 of his forces for "mixage." Nkunda said he originally decided against integration because RCD officials at the beginning of the Transition could not convince him the army had a positive role to play in restoring peace to the DRC. He claimed he did not then want to remain in an "army with no mission," and was within his rights as a soldier to refuse the command position offered him in 2003.

COMMENT: A CAMPAIGN OF DISINFORMATION

18. (SBU) Nkunda's interview is part of a public relations campaign of disinformation. The Tripartite Plus Joint Commission's June 7 declaration urging media outlets not to give a forum to "negative forces" such as Nkunda (reftel) was precisely meant to counter such distortions of the truth. End comment.

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

¶9. (U) Nkunda provided the following autobiographical information during his interview with "La Reference Plus":

Laurent Nkunda was born February 6, 1967, in the village of Murangi in present-day Rutshuru Territory (North Kivu). Married and the father of six children, he is the son of the traditional chief from Jomba, who comes from the Chizirungu family that arrived in the area in 1953. Nkunda obtained a degree in education in 1985 and went on to study psychology at the University of Kisangani. Though he dropped out of school there, he later enrolled at the Adventist University of Central Africa in Mutende, Rwanda, in 1989 to study education. He left university life for good in 1990 when war broke out in Rwanda against the Tutsi population. In 1992, he joined the Rwandan Patriotic Front (FPR), later entering the ranks of its armed wing, the Rwandan Patriotic Army (APR). After several years spent fighting in Rwanda, he returned to the DRC with Laurent Kabila's Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo (AFDL) in 1996. When Kabila decided in 1998 to expel Rwandan troops that had helped him topple the Mobutu regime, Nkunda joined the Kigali-backed Rally for Congolese Democracy (RCD). He left the RCD in 2004 to form the Military Council for the Defense of the People (CMDP), which later evolved into his current political organization, the National Congress for the Defense of the People (CNDP).

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